

Edited by Philip L. Kohl,
Mara Kozelsky, and
Nachman Ben-Yehuda

ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE CONSTRUCTION,
COMMEMORATION, AND CONSECRATION
OF NATIONAL PASTS

selective remembrances



Selective Remembrances

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Commemoration, and Consecration
of National Pasts*

EDITED BY PHILIP L. KOHL,
MARA KOZELSKY, AND
NACHMAN BEN-YEHUDA

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The Name Game

The Persian Gulf, Archaeologists, and the Politics of Arab-Iranian Relations

KAMYAR ABDI

Introduction

On November 14, 2004, the National Geographic Society (hereafter NGS) unveiled the eighth edition of its *Atlas of the World* (Lane-Miller 2004). Out of approximately seventeen thousand changes made in the eighth edition, a handful touched a sensitive nerve among Iranians around the world, reigniting a heated debate now more than a half century old. The source of the Iranian outrage was a decision by the NGS to use in its atlas the alternative secondary name Arabian Gulf, placing it in parentheses beneath the primary name Persian Gulf. Further, the atlas used the Arabic name Qeys for the Iranian island of Kish and added the Arabic name Sheykh Sho'eyb in parentheses beneath the name of the other Iranian island, Lavan. The atlas also labeled the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa "Occupied by Iran (claimed by U.A.E. [United Arab Emirates])" (fig. 7.1).

In the following weeks, a flood of e-mails protesting these changes began arriving at the NGS office in Washington, D.C., from Iran and expatriate Iranians around the world (Ala 2004). Accusations sparked over Internet forums and chat rooms, labeling the NGS "anti-Iranian," referring

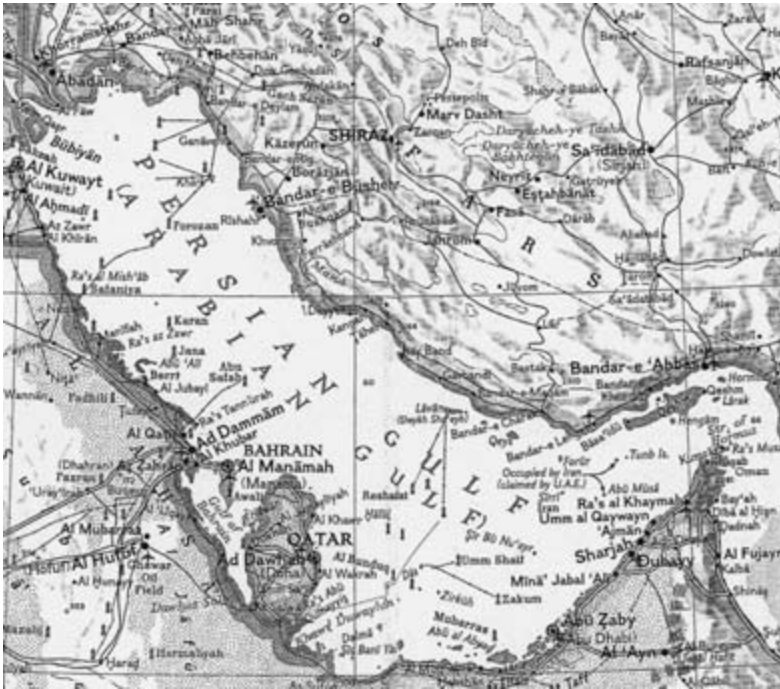


Figure 7.1. The original version of the map of the Persian Gulf region as it appeared in the eighth edition of the National Geographic Society's *Atlas of the World*

to a “sellout to Arab sheikhs’ oil dollars,” and even calling the NGS action “a Zionist plot to create division among Muslim nations” (Theodoulou 2004). The NGS was also accused of “selling fabricated history to Arabs” (Noor 2004). Iranians in Tehran and Los Angeles staged demonstrations to protest the changes. An online petition to reverse the changes had more than thirty thousand signatures (Anonymous 2004a). The NGS Web site was allegedly hacked, and “Arabian Gulf” was Google-bombed (Anonymous 2004b) (fig. 7.2).



After these grassroots actions, the matter gradually assumed a politically international dimension. On November 21, a week after the atlas appeared, the Iranian Ministry of Culture banned sales of the *National Geographic Magazine* in Iran and would not permit NGS reporters to enter the country (Anonymous 2004c). An invitation to a *National Geographic Magazine* editor to serve on a jury in a photo festival in Iran was withdrawn (Anonymous 2004d). In November and December, several Iranian Members of Parliament, parties, and organizations lodged official



The Gulf You Are Looking For Does Not Exist. Try Persian Gulf.

The gulf you are looking for is unavailable. No body of water by that name has ever existed. The correct name is Persian Gulf, which always has been, and will always remain, Persian.

Please try the following:

- Click the  button, and never try again.
- If you typed Arabian Gulf, make sure you read some history books.
- Click  [Search](#) to look for more information on the internet.

TRUTH 404- Gulf Not Found
Fact Explorer

Figure 7.2. "Arabian Gulf" Google-bombed

protests against the NGS (Anonymous 2004e, 2004f); the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a letter of protest to the NGS (Anonymous 2004g) and organized an exhibit of Persian Gulf historical maps (Anonymous 2004h).

On a more academic level, Iran received confirmation from UNESCO that "according to the existing documents in the UN the water way between the Arabian Peninsula and Iran is called the Persian Gulf" (Anonymous 2004i). Meanwhile, the Iranian Ministry of Culture announced plans to hold the first national Persian Gulf festival (Anonymous 2004j), and the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization disclosed its intention to build a chain of Persian Gulf museums along the Iranian

coast (Anonymous 2004k), starting in Bushehr (Anonymous 2004l). Further, some one hundred Iranian and foreign scholars participating in the second international Iranology Conference in Tehran in December condemned the attempt to change the name of the Persian Gulf (Anonymous 2004m). At least two archaeologists, Ahmad Hasan Dani of Quaid-i-Azam University in Pakistan (Anonymous 2004n) and Ernie Haerincq of Ghent University in Belgium (Anonymous 2004o), denounced attempts to change the name of the Persian Gulf, and an ancient-history scholar, Touraj Daryaee of California State University, Fullerton, withdrew his membership from the NGS (Anonymous 2004p).

Facing mounting criticism, the NGS released a statement emphasizing that “while National Geographic considers ‘Persian Gulf’ to be the primary name, it has been the Society’s cartographic practice to display a secondary name in parentheses when use of such a name has become commonly recognized” (Anonymous 2004q). On the question of the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, the statement explained, “National Geographic’s research determined that these islands are currently the subject of a dispute between Iran and the United Arab Emirates.” The NGS statement failed to elaborate why Arabic names were used for the Iranian islands of Kish and Lavan.

Various Iranians, including representatives from the National Iranian American Council; members of the Iranian delegation to the UN; and Reza Pahlavi, son and heir of the late shah of Iran; met with NGS officials to discuss the matter. In his meeting with Reza Pahlavi, John Fahey, president and CEO of NGS, assured that “his organization was respectful and fully cognizant of the level and depth of sentiment among Iranians on the matter . . . [and that it was] in the midst of an in depth study and reflection on the merits of the use of a secondary name for the Persian Gulf” (Anonymous 2004r). In private conversations, however, the NGS officials stressed that they could not ignore the voices of millions of Arabs. In response, a sarcastic question was asked: if the NGS was so concerned with the Arab opinion, why did it not insert “Occupied Palestine” in parentheses under the name of Israel in the atlas (Hosseini 2004)?

Finally, on December 28, the NGS offered a written apology to Iran and expressed its readiness to correct the mistake (Anonymous 2004s). In a proposal to the National Iranian American Council, the NGS offered to completely delete the phrase “occupied by Iran” in reference to the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa and to use the Iranian names for the islands of Kish and Lavan. On the name of the Persian Gulf, NGS offered to use only this name on most of its maps and delete “Arabian Gulf” in parentheses, but to insert in a small font “Historically

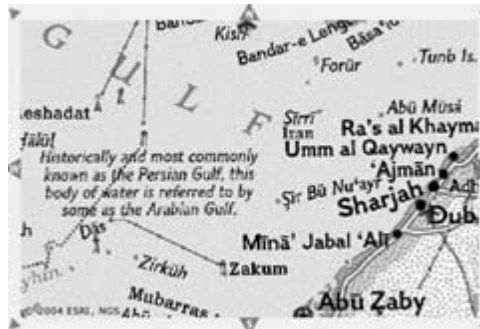


Figure 7.3. The modified version of the map of the Persian Gulf region as it appeared in the National Geographic Society Web site after Iranian objections

and most commonly known as the Persian Gulf, this body of water is referred to by some as the Arabian Gulf” and add an explanatory note on the political roots of the name Arabian Gulf (Anonymous 2004t).

These changes went into effect on December 30 (fig. 7.3) (Anonymous 2004u). Although the Iranian foreign minister called this a victory for every Iranian (Anonymous 2004v), some complained that there were still thousands of copies of the atlas in circulation with the objectionable names and phrases (Anonymous 2004w). Further, some argued that the explanatory note that NGS would be inserting in the online atlas would still give the name Arabian Gulf some sort of legitimacy (Anonymous 2004x). In the meantime, the NGS tried to downplay the political ramifications of the most recent changes under pressure from the Iranians, arguing that its maps undergo revision on a regular basis (Anonymous 2004y).

Why did such an unprecedented indignation arise on the part of Iranians, uniting a deeply divided community scattered around the world, with many religious, ethnic, political, and cultural orientations? What was so important about these NGS changes, given that names other than Persian Gulf have been around for several decades and are indicated on many other maps and atlases with international circulation?

One can think of several reasons for the Iranian outrage. First, for a long time, the NGS has been one of the very few organizations of international reputation consistently using the name Persian Gulf. The sudden change left many Iranians in a state of despair, fearing the loss of one of the last bastions of the name Persian Gulf. One should bear in mind that although the NGS is a private organization, many Iranians are under the false impression that, because of the word “National” in its title

and because it is based in the United States, the NGS is affiliated with the U.S. government and therefore represents the official U.S. opinion. This concern makes sense in light of the fact that, in an ironic turn of events, the United States, despite tumultuous relations with Iran during the past quarter century, is one of a very few governments in the world formally banning the use in its official documents of any name other than Persian Gulf for the body of water in question.

More important, perhaps, is an element internal to Iranian culture. In a society so accustomed to conspiracy theories, the NGS action has all the usual suspects: Arabs, whom most Iranians hold responsible for the erosion of Iran's pre-Islamic glory and who, collectively, are believed to be the archenemy of Iranians; and the United States, which has been a thorn in Iran's side for some twenty-five years. Throw in the British, who Iranians believe are responsible, one way or another, for every problem in the Middle East, and you have all the ingredients for a perfect conspiracy theory. No wonder some of the debates on the Internet hinted at the possibility of Arab involvement in the NGS action. But even more significantly, Iranians still have open wounds from the 1980–1988 war with Iraq, a war that, in the collective consciousness of Iranians, regardless of political or social background, was imposed on Iran by an Arab state that received support and blessing from other Arab states, the United States, and the European powers (Rejaee 1997).

It is not my intention to present here the history of the name of the Persian Gulf, as that history has been documented in detail (see Wilson 1928; Eqtadari 1966; Madani 1978; Mashkour 1990) and endorsed several times. The United Nations endorsed the name twice: first by its Arab member states pursuant to the document UNAD 311/Gen on March 5, 1971, and a second time pursuant to the document UNLA 45.8.2 (C) on August 10, 1984. Further, the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names has endorsed the name Persian Gulf every five years. Moreover, a circular issued by the UN General Secretariat on August 14, 1994, contained a reminder to adhere to "the approved expression 'Persian Gulf' in all documents, correspondence and publications issued by the Secretariat" and affirmed "commitment to use [of] this expression in full, that is, Persian Gulf, and the inadequacy and incorrectness of adopting the term 'Gulf' alone, even in cases of repetition."

My purpose in this chapter is, rather, to investigate the broader nationalist and political contexts within which names other than Persian Gulf have emerged in the past fifty years and to explore the stances archaeologists working in the region have taken in response to these developments. I first examine the relations between Iran and Arabs vis-à-vis

the Persian Gulf and the role of the British in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the region. Second, I look at the development of Arab nationalism in the region, along with its role in claiming the Persian Gulf as part of the Arab world. Finally, I consider the role the archaeological community, especially Western archaeologists, has assumed amid volatile Arab-Iranian relations.

Iranians, Arabs, and the British in the Persian Gulf

For more than two thousand years, ancient Mesopotamians referred to what is today known as the Persian Gulf as the Lower Sea. In the late sixth century BCE, Darius I, in his Suez inscription, referred to “the sea which goes from Persia” (Lecoq 1997: 248). While it is generally thought that this is the first reference to the body of water now called Persian Gulf identifying it as Persian, it seems that what Darius had in mind was in fact a larger geographic notion not unlike the Greek “Erythraean Sea,” which included the Persian Gulf, the western Indian Ocean, and the Red Sea as one massive body of water. It was in fact Hecataeus of Miletus who coined the term *Persikos kolpos* (Persian gulf) in his *Periodos Ges* sometime around 500 BCE. This name was adopted by later geographers in various forms in different languages (e.g., Persikon Kaitas, Persicus Sinus, Al-Khalij al-Fars) and became the common name for the body of water between what is today Iran and the Arabian Peninsula.

The common use of the name Persian Gulf owes much to the fact that for most of the past twenty-five hundred years Iran (ancient Persia) has been the major regional power in the Persian Gulf littoral. From the sixteenth century, however, other powers began to arrive on the shores of the Persian Gulf. First the Ottomans came, and with them the new name of Basra Körfezi (the Gulf of Basra) for the Persian Gulf, in reference to the city of Basra, the seat of the Ottoman province of Basra. But this name appeared only in Ottoman sources and did not gain international recognition until it was revived by Arab nationalists of the 1920s and 1930s who were trying to avoid using the name Persian Gulf (see below).

Also arriving in the Persian Gulf, from the sixteenth century onward, were the colonial European powers: first the Portuguese and then the Dutch, the French, and the British; the British ultimately prevailed as the dominant colonial power in the region (Kelly 1968). Although the British adopted a predominantly diplomatic approach, punctuated with episodes of military pressure toward Iran to secure their interests in the Persian Gulf, they also tried to harness various Arab tribes and sheikhdoms

on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, and this effort proved to be a challenge. In order to protect maritime traffic to and from India, the British had to engage in negotiations with various Arab tribes, while often using military force to keep them at bay. Eventually, in 1820, the British pressed Arab tribes and sheikhdoms into a General Treaty of Peace, by which the Arabs agreed to cease plunder and piracy by sea and land (Dubuisson 1978). An Ottoman attempt to exert more influence in the Persian Gulf in the late nineteenth century (Anscombe 1997) invited more assertive British involvement that led to the signing of the Exclusive Agreement in 1892 and turned Trucial sheikhdoms (the predecessor to the United Arab Emirates) into British protectorates (Albaharna 1975: 29). The takeover of the southern parts of the Ottoman Empire after World War I paved the way for the British to create the states of Iraq and Transjordan and consolidated British control over Arab sheikhdoms. After World War I, the British continued to maintain political and military presence in the Persian Gulf region, primarily to secure immense oil resources recently discovered in the region. That discovery gradually attracted the United States also to the Persian Gulf (Palmer 1992).

The presence of the British in the Persian Gulf continued until December 1, 1971, when they terminated their treaties with Arab sheikhdoms and withdrew from the Persian Gulf, allowing for the states of Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates to formally declare their independence (Balfour-Paul 1991). The British withdrawal and a perceived Soviet threat created a power vacuum in the Persian Gulf that none of the Arab states of the time were able to fill. Therefore, with implicit U.S. and British blessing, the shah of Iran, the only regional authority with the requisite military power and political weight, in spite of Arab acrimony, assumed the self-appointed position of guardian of the Persian Gulf. As part of asserting its regional authority, one day before British withdrawal, on November 30, 1971, Iran moved onto the island of Abu Musa following prior arrangements with a reluctant sheikh of Sharjah (Amin 1981: 221) and took control of the Greater and Lesser Tunb islands from Ras al-Khaimah.

Iran has had claims on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf and its islands, including Bahrain, since pre-Islamic times (Nafisi 1954; Nish'at 1965, Eqtedari 1966). In more recent history, Iran reasserted its claims in the sixteenth century when the Safavids ejected the Portuguese from the Persian Gulf with British naval support. Following the collapse of the Safavid Empire in 1722, the Arab tribes of Oman and Ras al-Khaimah took advantage of Iran's weakness and occupied many of the islands in the Persian Gulf, including the Tunbs and Abu Musa, using them as a

base for piracy. Nadir Shah Afshar and Karim Khan Zand succeeded in reasserting Iran's presence in the Persian Gulf, but it fell to the British to quell the Arab piracy with a combination of military suppression and diplomatic treaties.

In 1887, in response to increased Ottoman presence in the western parts of the Persian Gulf (Anscombe 1997), the Qajars began asserting more influence in the eastern Persian Gulf. As part of their new policy in the Persian Gulf, the Qajars banished the northern branch of the Qawasim (the ruling families of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah) from their semiautonomous base at Bandar-i Lingah and the nearby Siri Island, the last of the strongholds they maintained, from their pirate days, on the northern shores of the Persian Gulf. In response, in 1903 the British encouraged the Qawasim to raise their flags on the islands of Greater Tunb and Abu Musa, but these were removed by the Iranian customs police. In return, the British used the threat of force against Iran to reinstate the Qawasim flag on the islands (Schofield 2001: 224). For the next few decades, Iran and Britain played a game of cat and mouse over these three islands, putting up their own flag and taking down the other's flag, ignoring each other's claims, and threatening to use force if necessary (Mojtahed-Zadeh 1994). The quarrel between Iran and Britain over the islands came to an end with the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf in 1971. The United Arab Emirates, however, claimed sovereignty over the islands after their independence (El-Issa 1998) and, most recently, renewed their claims in 1992 following attempts by some people, including some citizens of the U.A.E., to enter Abu Musa (Schofield 1997: 150–154; Mojtahed-Zadeh 1998: 292–294).

Iran's more recent claims over Bahrain also date to the Safavid period, when Iran removed the Portuguese from this archipelago (Adamiyat 1955). Iran retained Bahrain until 1717, when it was captured by the imam of Oman, only to be recaptured by Nadir Shah and then lost again in 1783, this time to the 'Utubi Arab tribe from the mainland. Threats from Omanis and Wahhabis and rival claims by the Ottoman Empire and Iran prompted the 'Utubi sheikh of Bahrain to enter a protectorate treaty with the British in 1861, according to which, in return for British protection against external aggression, Bahrain would abstain from the prosecution of war, piracy, and slavery by sea (Aitchison 1933: 234–235). Iran, however, maintained its claim, arguing that Britain had recognized Iran's sovereignty over Bahrain once in 1822 and again in 1869 (Adamiyat 1955). Iran once again became concerned with Bahrain in 1905, when Shi'a residents of Bahrain were attacked by a mob provoked by Sunni religious leaders. The British discouraged Iran from intervention but as-

sured protection of the Shi'ites by inducing the sheikh of Bahrain to deport some of the more fanatical Sunni leaders (Marlowe 1962: 258n6).

The quarrel between Iran and Britain over Bahrain continued throughout most of the twentieth century, and as late as the 1960s, letters bearing Bahraini stamps were treated by Iran as unstamped and returned, while passports bearing endorsements or a visa issued by British authorities for any of the sheikhdoms were not accepted in Iran (Foreign Office 1953: 20). The question of Bahrain came to a conclusion in 1970, when the shah dropped Iran's claims over Bahrain and recognized its sovereignty.

Iran's ambitions in the Persian Gulf continued throughout the 1970s, culminating in dispatching troops to help quell a rebellion by a separatist group in Dhofar, Oman. This group, initially called the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Arabian Gulf, started out as a movement aimed at ejecting the British from the Persian Gulf and spreading revolution to conservative states on the Arabian Peninsula, but when Qaboos bin-Said removed his father from the throne of Oman in 1970 in a coup assisted by the British, the movement, now called the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf and later the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman, increasingly shifted its belligerence toward the Omani government (Halliday 1975: 316–404). In addition to British troops, Sultan Qaboos received support from the shah, who in 1973 dispatched an Iranian army brigade, along with helicopters and artillery, to assist the Omanis in suppressing the rebellion. The rebels put up a fight against a far superior Omani-Iranian joint force for another two years before being finally subdued, with remnants fleeing to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (Peterson 1977).

Needless to say, Arab states viewed Iran's growing influence in the Persian Gulf region as a threat. Iraq, in particular, considering itself the stronghold of Arab nationalism in the region (see below), argued that the Arab states should preserve the Arab nature of the Persian Gulf from what was described as a systematic Iranian invasion and infiltration into the Arab lands and encouraged Arab states to repel the invader (Iran) and to preserve the Arabism of the gulf (Abdulghani 1984: 77–78). Facing the growing threat of Iranian nationalism in the Persian Gulf, Iraq described Iran's actions as "dreams of grandeur that drive them [the Iranians] to adopt policies of territorial aggrandizement in order to re-establish an empire which has been dead and buried since the time of Alexander the Great" (Abdulghani 1984: 92).

The 1979 revolution in Iran drastically changed the political configuration of the region. After the collapse of the imperial regime, the new revolutionary government disassociated Iran from military alliance with

the United States, broke off relations with Israel, and withdrew its forces from Dhofar. The islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, however, remained under Iranian control. In the chaotic months after the revolution, the early revolutionary government sent mixed messages about its territorial claims in the Persian Gulf vis-à-vis Arab states. In 1979, shortly after the revolution, Sadeq Rouhani, a senior clergyman, issued threats of annexation against Bahrain, but Sadeq Khalkhali, the chief justice of the Islamic Revolutionary Courts, announced that Iran was contemplating evacuating the islands, a statement immediately denied by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Amin 1981: 28).

While in some quarters in the Islamic world the Iranian Revolution was hailed as ushering in a new era of pan-Islamism, it nonetheless led to apprehension among conservative Arab states, especially those on the Persian Gulf, which feared the spread of revolutionary sentiments to their countries (Menshari 1990). Partly to prevent this from happening, Iraq, now firmly under Saddam Hussein, launched a massive military campaign over its twelve-hundred-kilometer border with Iran on September 22, 1980. By the following month, Iraqi forces advanced into Khuzestan and other Iranian provinces bordering Iraq. In a letter submitted to the UN on September 25, Iraq stated that it had no expansionist ambitions in Iran, but in its communiqué to the Arab League, it declared that it was fighting in the name of Arab nations against a non-Arab state to liberate part of the Arab land occupied by Iran. This was a reference to the long-held claim by Arab nationalists that Khuzestan, the province in southwestern Iran, was an Arab land that, like Palestine, had been occupied by a foreign power (see Ramazani 1972: 41 for a brief background). Most Arab states, including those on the Persian Gulf, publicly declared their support for Iraq (Lotfian 1997).

In a series of military campaigns over 1981–1982, Iran managed to take back most of the land occupied by Iraq and even advanced into Iraqi territory, but the war dragged on until 1988, when Iran finally submitted to UN Resolution 598, calling for a cease-fire. During the eight years of the Iran-Iraq War, relations between Iran and Arab states on the Persian Gulf were tense at best, with the latter supporting Iraq both politically and financially in its war effort against Iran. In 1981 Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the U.A.E., and Oman formed the *Majlis al-Ta'avon al-doval al-Khalij al-'Arabiya*, commonly known in the West as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Hollis 1993). While primarily aimed at boosting political cohesion among Arab states on the Persian Gulf, the GCC took steps to increase the military power of its members in light of a perceived Iranian threat. But, as examples such as the Tanker

War of 1984–1988 and the Persian Gulf wars of 1990–1991 and 2003 demonstrate, these states have often relied on Western, especially U.S., military support in times of crisis. The GCC thus proved to be a gateway for Western powers, especially the United States, to gain a foothold in the Persian Gulf for the first time since the British withdrawal, a development that Iran deeply resented (Ramazani 1990).

As relations between Arab states on the Persian Gulf and Iran began to improve after the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab states' relations with Iraq turned sour, culminating in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War. In the meantime, Iran replaced its ideologically driven attitude toward Arab states on the Persian Gulf with one more concerned about commercial and economic cooperation. Deep-rooted nationalist sentiments, however, proved difficult to overcome.

Arab Nationalism and the Persian Gulf

The pivotal role of the British in carving Arab states out of the Ottoman Empire after World War I has been subject to much study (e.g., Silverfarb 1994; Marr 2004; Simon and Tejirian 2004). Arab states in the Persian Gulf region, in particular, owed much to the British. It was British interference in the Persian Gulf that transformed Arab tribes, which were traditionally engaged in nomadic pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, maritime trade, and piracy, into sheikhdoms that ultimately formed the basis of modern Arab nation-states in the region. The British literally drew the blueprints for these states, defined their territorial boundaries (Wilkinson 1991), supported local sheikhs and later the rulers of the newly created states, and transformed their rudimentary economies with the help of massive oil revenues. Arguably, the initiative for creating a national history and identity for these countries was also undertaken by the British through conducting archaeological fieldwork and establishing archaeological services in the newly formed Arab states. This enterprise began in Iraq, where the remains of ancient Mesopotamia were coveted and unearthed.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of Arab states in the Persian Gulf region coincided with rising tides of nationalism among Arab intellectuals (Dawn 1971; Khalidi et al. 1991; Jankowski and Gershoni 1997; Dawisha 2003). Having captured the southern provinces of the Ottoman Empire, the British created the state of Iraq by putting together the three Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and

Basra (Simon and Tejirian 2004). In the first decades of its existence, the new Iraqi state attempted to construct a national identity to serve as the basis of political hegemony (Simon 1997). The credit for formulating a doctrine of Arab nationalism in Iraq goes to a number of Arab intellectuals who emerged from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. Two important figures in the early history of Arab nationalism in Iraq—Sati' al-Husri and Darwish al-Miqdadi—played an important role in first attempting to change the name of the Persian Gulf.

Abu-Khaldun Sati' al-Husri (1881–1968), considered one of the founders of Arab nationalism (Cleveland 1971) and described as the “intellectual prophet of Arab nationalism” (Dawisha 2003: 49), was born in Yemen to Syrian parents and studied political science and management in Istanbul during Ottoman times. Husri began his post-Ottoman political career as minister of communication after Syria gained independence. But after the French takeover of Syria, Husri moved with King Faysal to Iraq, where he served in the newly founded Iraqi government and taught at the Higher Teachers College (al-Husri 1967–1968). As the director general of education, a position to which he was appointed directly by King Faysal, Husri was instrumental in organizing Iraq's educational, intellectual, and scientific activities, thereby attaining the informal title of “Father of Iraqi public education” (al-Hadid 1932: 237). In these years, Husri was responsible for composing the curriculum, selecting textbooks, and indoctrinating the upcoming generation of Iraqi school children in Arab nationalism (Simon 1986: 75–84).

As an early ideologue of Arab nationalism, Husri stressed two interwoven principles as defining characteristics of a nation: a common language and a shared history. According to Husri, the Arabic language, originating from the Arabian Peninsula in ancient times and protected from outside influence, and the long Arab history, extending to times before the arrival of Islam, formed the essential elements of Arab national identity (Cleveland 1971: 123–126). Husri adopted the notion of *Volk* from German historiography of the 1930s that stressed an early ancestral nation that dazzled the world and disseminated the hallmarks of civilization. While German historians of the time considered early German tribes as the source of civilization, Husri argued that such a role belonged to the Semites from the ancient Near East, or what he called pre-Islamic Arabs (Simon 1997: 89).

While at the Higher Teachers College, Husri hired Darwish al-Miqdadi, a Palestinian graduate of the American University in Beirut and one of the early ideologues of Arab nationalism (Dawn 1988a, 1988b). Miqdadi was responsible for introducing the notion of a nuclear “Arab

homeland” comprising Iraq, Syria, and Arabia (al-Miqdadi 1931), based on the idea of the Fertile Crescent that was first introduced by James Henry Breasted (1916). Already a popular work among Arab nationalists with knowledge of English, Breasted’s book soon appeared in an Arabic translation (Birastid 1926) and was well received in Arab lands. Miqdadi’s notion of the Arab homeland received full elaboration in his *Tarikh al-Umma al-‘Arabiyya (History of the Arab Nation)* (al-Miqdadi 1931), which soon became a standard textbook in Iraq, as well as in Syria and Palestine, and continued to influence several generations of students (Simon 1986: 42). Following Husri, Miqdadi stressed the importance of language in defining a nation, and he further argued that all the Semitic-speaking peoples of the ancient Near East, from the Akkadians, Babylonians, and Assyrians to the Hyksos, were the ancestors of the Arab people and part of a “Semito-Arab” culture.

The Semito-Arab homeland was, according to Miqdadi, occupied by Semitic-speaking people from earliest times and surrounded on both sides by hostile Aryans. From the West came a series of Aryans, starting with Alexander and the Greeks and continuing all the way to the British and the French, who held Arab lands in their control. But a greater Aryan threat to the Arabs was to their east, the Persians, who, according to Miqdadi, had a long history of aggression toward Arab lands, desiring to exert revenge on Arabs for the loss of their glory, and who had humiliated Arabs on a number of occasions and corrupted their culture (al-Miqdadi 1931; Dawn 1988b: 72). It is not surprising, then, to see that Miqdadi deliberately avoided the name Persian Gulf in his writings, using instead the defunct Ottoman name al-Khalij al-Basra (Gulf of Basra). In this, Miqdadi was perhaps inspired by Husri, who, in his extensive research and publications on the historical geography of Arab lands, also avoided using the name Persian Gulf, always referring to the “Gulf of Basra” or the “Gulf of Qatif” or simply “the Gulf” (al-Husri 1957: map 2, 196–198, 204–205).

Miqdadi’s influence, transmitted to the upcoming Arab generation through his books, was immense (Ziadeh 1952; Faris 1954), laying the foundations for the Nasserism and Ba’athism of the next generation (Carré 1979) and sowing the seeds of antagonism toward westerners and Iranians among Arab nationalists (for the case of Iraq, see Bengio 1998: 127–145).

Arab nationalism received a major boost in 1952 with the rise of Gamal ‘Abd al-Nasser in Egypt (Jankowski 1997) and in 1958 with the coup in Iraq; both developments expanded Arab nationalism to the eastern wing of the Arab world. The Persian Gulf was the most important

artery linking Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula to India and the Far East. Animosity toward the West, especially Britain and the United States, and Israel as a Western crony in the Arab land, was emphasized in the Arab nationalism espoused by Nasser. Iran was also branded a Western collaborator, especially after the 1953 British- and U.S.-backed coup that ousted the nationalist government of Mohammad Mossadig and reinstalled the shah.

The 1960 *de facto* recognition of Israel by the shah worsened the already sour relationship between Iran and Arab states. Egypt broke off diplomatic relations with Iran and encouraged other Arab states to do the same. While few Arab states complied, the Arab League and most Arab states condemned Iran's recognition of Israel. Meanwhile, Egypt under Nasser unleashed a war of words against Iran as it was trying to expand its influence in the Persian Gulf through political and economic channels, a development that Iran observed with much suspicion (Ramazani 1972: 35–41). Egypt and Iran even engaged in a brief proxy war in 1962, when Egypt supported rebels in Yemen while Iran backed the monarchists (Schmidt 1968: 162, 280). Nasser pursued his ambitions in the Persian Gulf until 1967, when Egypt's defeat by Israel greatly diminished his prestige and curtailed his expansionist ambitions. As one observer pointed out: "The triumph of Nasserism in the Arab world, leading to effective Egyptian control of the Arab shores of the Gulf, would almost inevitably have meant an Egyptian attempt to make of the Persian Gulf an Arab lake. To Iranians this intention was forecast in Arab nationalist reference to the 'Arabian Gulf'. The failure of Abdul Nasr's wider ambitions was therefore a source of unmitigated satisfaction in Iran, where it was realized that the term 'Arabian Gulf' represents, not the shadow of an impending reality, but the ghost of a lost cause" (Marlowe 1962: 206–207).

It is commonly believed that it was Nasser who initiated the name *Al-khalij al-'Arabi* (Arabian Gulf). Whether this is true or not, it was thanks to him that this name gained popularity in Arab lands. In his vigorous speeches, Nasser introduced slogans such as "*al-umma al-'arabiya min al-muhit al-atlasi ila al-khalij al-'arabi*" (the Arab nation from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf) to call for Arab unity. His parlance was soon adopted by other Arab nationalists and used in spoken and written word (Dawisha 2003: 185). For example, the Iraqi propaganda machine, boosted by the 1958 coup, soon unleashed a war of words against anyone purportedly opposed to the Arabs, including Iranians, and regularly called the Persian Gulf *Al-khalij al-'Arabi*.

By the 1960s, all Arab states passed laws and issued decrees making the use of the name Arabian Gulf mandatory in their publications and communications with the rest of the world (Albaharna 1975: 1n1). Iran, considering the name Persian Gulf part of its national heritage, fought back by taking the matter to the UN and receiving an endorsement pursuant to the document UNAD 311/Gen on March 5, 1971, signed by all members, including the Arab states. Despite signing the UN resolution, Arab states, especially those bordering the Persian Gulf, continued to use and promote the name Arabian Gulf or a simple reference to “the Gulf.” Such usage was evident in numerous Arab publications and in the 1974 establishment of the Center for Arabian Gulf Studies at Basra University, with its specialized journal *Al-Khalij al-‘Arabi*; in the 1974 launching of Gulf Air, the national airline of Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman; in the 1979 founding of the Arabian Gulf University in Bahrain; in the 1978 funding of the Centre for Arab Gulf Studies at the University of Exeter (Pridham 1988), renamed the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies in 1999, with MA and PhD programs in “Arab Gulf Studies”; and in the 1982 institution of the Gulf Cooperation Council (see above) and even the Arabian Gulf Rugby Football Union in 1974. Perhaps the most audacious move was made by the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council in 1977 when it established the Arab Gulf Office, headed by Saddam Hussein himself, to protect the Persian Gulf from Iran’s imperialism and to preserve its Arab nature (Bengio 1998: 140).

Following these developments from the 1960s to the 1980s, the archaeological literature coming out of Arab lands also underwent a process of change aimed at expunging the name Persian Gulf.

Enter the Archaeologists?

In order to understand the mechanisms through which names other than Persian Gulf have emerged in the archaeological literature in the past fifty years, it is imperative to examine in some detail the development of archaeology in Arab states in the region since World War I. Important issues include the development of archaeology in Iraq and the establishment of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, the role of early directors of the department, the rise of indigenous Iraqi archaeology and its avoidance of using the name Persian Gulf, and the response to these developments by Western archaeologists. Finally, the rise and development of archaeology in Arab states on the Persian Gulf calls for

some comment, especially the relations of these states with Western archaeologists.

Excavations in Iraq were resumed by the British after World War I even before the armistice was signed in 1918. The first postwar excavations in Iraq were carried out by Reginald Campbell Thompson, who had worked at Nineveh before the war and served during the war in Iraq as a captain in the British Intelligence Corps and also as the representative of the British Museum. Campbell Thompson launched excavations at Ur and at Eridu in 1918, using Indian troops under his command for actual digging (Lloyd 1980: 180), while H. R. Hall, who succeeded him at Ur the following year, used Turkish prisoners of war as his labor force.

The British established the Iraqi Department of Antiquities in 1922, with a British citizen as its director, first Gertrude Bell and then Sidney Smith (who later became the keeper of the Department of Egyptian and Babylonian Antiquities in the British Museum). The 1920s and early 1930s were a golden era in Mesopotamian archaeology: large-scale excavations by expeditions from different countries were carried out throughout Iraq, including efforts by the Deutsch-Orient Gesellschaft at Warka; by the Louvre at Tellah; by Oxford University and the Field Museum at Kish; by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago at Khorsabad and at several sites in the Diyala region, including Tell Asmar, Tell Agrab, and Khafajah; and by the British Museum and the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Ur.

On October 3, 1932, Iraq gained full independence from Britain. King Faysal died in September 1933 and was succeeded by his son King Ghazi I. With him, a group called the Iha al-Watana (National Brotherhood Party) took control of the Iraq government and embarked on a more nationalistic course. In the same year Sati' al-Husri (see above) was appointed the director of the Department of Antiquities (fig. 7.4).

Soon after assuming his position, Husri began making changes to the Antiquities Law. Meanwhile, Iraqi nationalists launched a propaganda campaign alleging that Iraq had been robbed of its national heritage by foreign archaeological expeditions operating under the liberal Antiquities Law composed by the British Gertrude Bell. The new Antiquities Law, passed in 1934, imposed severe restrictions on the rights of foreign expeditions to archaeological finds and on the export of antiquities. This led to a gradual migration of Western expeditions to Syria, which, still under French mandate, had more relaxed antiquities laws. Husri laid the foundation for an indigenous Iraqi archaeology by emphasizing national interests in archaeological research, dispatching employees of the department to gain experience by working with foreign expeditions, and



Figure 7.4. Sati' al-Husri accompanying Princess Alice of Athlone during a visit to the Iraq Museum in 1939. Seton Lloyd can be seen in the background. After Lloyd 1980: fig. 68.

sending Iraqi students abroad to receive training in archaeology and ancient languages.

Husri's support of Arab nationalists, especially during Rashid Ali al-Gaylani's government, led to his expulsion from Iraq in 1941 (Cleveland 1971). While Husri continued his research and writing on Arab nationalism, first in London and then in Cairo, the Department of Antiquities was entrusted to Naji al-Asil (1895–1963), another fervent Arab nationalist. Asil was born in Mosul and studied in Istanbul and Beirut, earning a degree in medicine. He joined the Arab nationalist movement in Hijaz and became a close friend of Sharif Husayn, representing him in London after World War I. Asil returned to Iraq in 1926, where he became a professor and later the dean of the Higher Teachers College; at that institution he made acquaintance with Husri and Miqdadi. Later he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served in Iran, where he was

responsible for signing the 1937 Irano-Iraqi Boundary Treaty (Ramazani 1972: 121–124). Asil briefly served as minister of foreign affairs in 1936–1937, but he soon retired from politics, taking over the position of the director general of antiquities from Husri in 1941, a position he held until his death. Asil continued with Husri's initiatives, emphasizing indigenous archaeology. His leadership is evident in developments such as the launching of the journal *Sumer* in 1944 as the official periodical of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities.

During the Husri-Asil years, the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, having more or less cut off foreign expeditions from fieldwork in Iraq, began its own independent excavations at Samarra, Wasit, Tell 'Uqair, 'Aqar Quf, Hassuna, Tell Harmal, and Eridu. This florescence of the department owed much to two young Iraqi students returning from the University of Chicago, Taha Baqir and Fuad Safar, and their locally trained and able architectural assistant Mohammad-Ali Mostafa. The influence of Husri and Miqdadi on Safar and Baqir can be seen in their writings. For example, Safar argues that one of the objectives of his excavations at early sites in southern Mesopotamia, such as 'Uqair and Eridu, has been exploring the roots of Semito-Arab culture (Safar 1947). Baqir explored the roots of Semito-Arab culture by studying the relations between Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the ancient lands of Dilmun and Magan (Baqir 1948). Even at this early date we already see the Persian Gulf simply being called in their publications "al-Khalij al-Basra" or "al-Khalij" (the Gulf) (cf. Baqir 1948: 145; Baqir and Francis 1948: 175).

By the late 1950s, the name Persian Gulf had been completely expunged from the archaeological literature coming out of Iraq; it was replaced with "Arabian Gulf." This trend was gradually adopted by archaeologists from other countries working in Iraq, beginning with some of the earlier generation of Mesopotamian archaeologists such as Seton Lloyd.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Iraqis still employed numerous foreigners at the Department of Antiquities, most importantly Seton Lloyd, who worked as a technical adviser for the department from 1939 to 1948, participating in excavations at 'Uqair, Hassuna, and Eridu. Lloyd was one of the major characters of the golden age of Near Eastern archaeology (Lloyd 1986); he had an impressive résumé that included excavations at a number of well-known sites in the Near East and some of the most widely read books on Near Eastern archaeology (cf. Lloyd 1947, 1963, 1978, 1980). The shift in Lloyd's publications from "Persian Gulf" to "Arabian Gulf" can be viewed as a model for the changing stance in the archaeological community. Throughout his earlier publications (Lloyd 1947, 1963), he consistently used the name Persian Gulf, but from the

1970s, we see him shifting to “Arabian Gulf” (see Lloyd 1978: map 1). This practice was not limited to new publications: for example, we see that the exquisite frontispiece map with the name Persian Gulf in the original edition of his classic *Foundations in the Dust* (Lloyd 1947) was replaced by two maps of inferior quality with “Arabian Gulf” in the revised edition of the same work (Lloyd 1980: maps 1–2).

Of the later generations of Western archaeologists working in Iraq, many showed no hesitation in using “Arabian Gulf” (cf. Oates and Oates 1976), but many tried to bypass the problem by using “Gulf” or “The Gulf” (cf. Postgate 1977, 1992; Reade 1978) or by simply leaving the gulf unnamed on their maps. In the meantime, archaeologists with interests in both Iran and Iraq tried to demonstrate their impartiality by using “Gulf” or “The Gulf” (cf. Wright and Johnson 1975); they would use “Persian Gulf” in publications dealing with Iran (cf. Moorey 1975) and “The Gulf” in those pertaining to Iraq (cf. Moorey 1976), or they used new names such as “Arab-Persian Gulf” (cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993; Kuhrt 1995).

Archaeology in Arab lands on the Persian Gulf started out later than in Iraq, again with the British at the forefront (Crawford 2003). The first series of archaeological research projects on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf began with a survey of Bahrain and Qatar in 1878 by Captain E. L. Durand, a British officer attached to the British political residence in Bushehr, Iran. Durand’s report on burial mounds of Bahrain piqued the interest of the British, who dispatched Colonel F. P. Prideaux, the political resident at Bushehr, to carry out a more thorough survey of the vast necropolis in Bahrain in 1908.

Sporadic work in Bahrain continued during the first half of the twentieth century by the British and the Americans, including engineers working on oil fields in the region. But the first systematic and long-term archaeological field research along the southern shores of the Persian Gulf did not begin until 1953, when the First Danish Expedition to Arabia arrived in Bahrain. Rumor has it that the Danes owed the opportunity to work in Bahrain to Sir Charles Belgrave, the British adviser to the sheikh of Bahrain (fig. 7.5). It is noteworthy that this same Sir Charles Belgrave was the first westerner to use and advocate the name Arabian Gulf, first in the journal *Soat al-Bahrain (Voice of Bahrain)* in 1955 (Majidzadeh 1993: 5n7) and then in his popular book *The Pirate Coast* (Belgrave 1960: 3); some twenty-five years earlier, he had published a paper on the Persian Gulf (Belgrave 1931).

Having, to his surprise, received two applications for fieldwork in Bahrain in the same week in 1953, one from the University of Aarhus in



Figure 7.5. Sir Charles Belgrave accompanying Sheikh Salman of Bahrain during a visit to London in 1953

Denmark and the other from the University of Pennsylvania, Belgrave decided to toss a coin to choose. The coin was tossed and the Danes were permitted to embark on fieldwork in Bahrain (Rice 1994: 55). I assume that the fact that Geoffrey Bibby, the liaison of the Danish expedition, was a British citizen had no impact on the decision.

Bibby was an employee of the Iraq Petroleum Company and was instrumental in putting together and launching the Danish expedition. He talked P. V. Glob, his wartime friend and later a professor of prehistory at the University of Aarhus, into dropping his fieldwork in the lush fields of Denmark and undertaking fieldwork in the sands of Arabia. After obtaining the permit for fieldwork in Bahrain, Bibby once again turned to Belgrave, who secured funding for their work through the Bahrain government (Potts 1998: 192). Interestingly enough, when the Danish expedition expanded its activities to Failaka Island, off the coast

of Kuwait, in 1958, they came into contact with none other than Darwish al-Miqdadi, now the deputy director of education in Kuwait and responsible for overseeing archaeological activities (Bibby 1969: 201). In such an environment, it is fairly easy to imagine why archaeologists would quickly shift in their publications from “Persian Gulf” (cf. Glob 1960; Glob and Bibby 1960) to “Arabian Gulf” (cf. Bibby 1964, 1965, 1966).

From the 1970s onward, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, with a surge in archaeological research in Arab countries on the Persian Gulf, “Arabian Gulf” was used more frequently in the literature. For some, the change from “Persian Gulf” to “Arabian Gulf” occurred almost overnight (cf., e.g., During-Caspers 1971b [“Persian Gulf”] and 1971a [“Arabian Gulf”]), while for others it took somewhat longer to make the transition. Some started with “Persian Gulf” (Tosi 1974), went on to “The Gulf” (Tosi 1984), and finally arrived at “Arabian Gulf” (Tosi 1986). Here too, some authors tried to evade the problem by creating names such as “Persischen/Arabischen Golf” (Scholz 1990) or “Arab-Iranian Gulf” (Howard-Carter 1972) or, more commonly, simply using “Gulf” or “The Gulf” (De Cardi 1971).

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was a turning point for archaeology in the region in general and the name of the Persian Gulf in particular. Once a bustling center for archaeological research, Iran shut its doors to foreign archaeologists and adopted a self-imposed archaeological isolation following the revolution. In despair, archaeologists who had formerly worked in Iran sought field opportunities elsewhere, and some found refuge in Arab countries. This migration brought about a change in the use of the name of Persian Gulf. Of the migrating archaeologists, some did not hold a grudge against Iran and tried to remain impartial by using “Gulf” or “The Gulf” in general (cf. several papers in Finkbeiner 1993), or “Gulf” in publications pertaining to Arab lands (cf. Haerinck 1992) and “Persian Gulf” in those pertaining to Iran (cf. Haerinck 1998). But some quickly turned to “Arabian Gulf” (cf. Potts 1978), while others delayed slightly longer taking the fateful step (cf. Tosi 1986; Whitehouse 2000), again with some making a brief stop at “The Gulf” (cf. Roaf 1990) before arriving at “Arabian Gulf” (cf. Roaf and Gabraith 1994). This trend was not restricted to Anglophone archaeologists; some Francophone archaeologists have also shifted over the years from “Golfe persique” to “Golfe” (cf. de Miroschedji 1986), “Golfe Arabo-persique” (cf. Beaucamp and Robin 1983; Salle 1987), “Golfe arabe” (Salle 1981), and “Golfe arabique” (cf. Tixier 1980; Inizan 1980). In Germany, the *Tübingen Atlas von Vorderasiatische Archäologie* also began its map series in mid-1977

with “Persischer Golf” but switched to “Arabische-Persischer Golf” in the late 1980s.

One can imagine that the Iranian archaeological community considers Western archaeologists’ disregard for the name of the Persian Gulf and their use of other names, especially “Arabian Gulf” after shifting their fieldwork to Arab lands, to be opportunist and a betrayal of academic integrity (cf. Azarnoush 1993; Majidzadeh 1993; Alizadeh 2003). Some criticisms have been expressed in the form of reviews of books dealing with research on the Arab shores of the Persian Gulf. For example, D. T. Potts’s *Arabian Gulf in Antiquity* (1990) met with much praise in Iran for gathering and synthesizing a tremendous amount of data on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman but was simultaneously criticized for calling the body of water “Arabian Gulf” (Abdi 1994). Of other publication using “Arabian Gulf,” examples such as Harriet Crawford’s *Dilmun and Its Gulf Neighbours* (1998) have been applauded for providing an accessible synthesis for the archaeology of the Arab lands on the Persian Gulf (Alizadeh 2003), whereas Michael Rice’s *Archaeology of the Arabian Gulf* (1994) has been criticized for being inaccurate, anecdotal, and sometimes outright fictitious (Abdi 1995).

An alarming revelation came from Azarnoush (1993), who exposed the editors of the proceedings of a seminar on religions in pre-Islamic Central Asia—one of whom engaged in fieldwork in Arab countries (see Lombard 1981)—for deleting the adjective “Persian” from the map in Azarnoush’s paper (Azarnoush 1991) without consulting him and refusing to publish his objections in this regard.

The most comprehensive rebuttal from the Iranian archaeological community was put forward by Majidzadeh (1993), who traced the archaeological connection of the attempts to change the name of the Persian Gulf and criticized Western archaeologists who switched from “Persian Gulf” to one of the other names after their fieldwork in Iran was disrupted following the 1979 revolution. Majidzadeh nonetheless argued that one way to deal with this problem was to abandon the archaeological isolation Iran had imposed on itself and to allow foreign archaeologists to resume fieldwork in Iran, a point reiterated by Abdi (1995, 1999) that may or may not have led to Iranian archaeology’s rapprochement with the West in recent years (Lawler 2003).

In the past few years, as Western archaeologists are beginning to return to Iran, one can already see some changes, but not without some political implications. For example, one major advocate of the name Arabian Gulf (Potts 1990, 1992, 1993) was allowed to resume fieldwork in Iran only after a much-publicized apology to the Iranian people an-

nounced in daily newspapers and a show of redemption by using “Persian Gulf” in his recent publications (cf. Potts 1999). Others who tried to remain impartial over the years by using “Gulf” (cf. Wright 1994; Haerinck 1992; Pollock 1999) have also begun using “Persian Gulf” (cf. Wright 1998; Haerinck 1998; Pollock and Bernbeck 2005) after closer interaction with Iranian colleagues or with growing prospects of fieldwork in Iran. This development, however, has not deterred archaeologists working in Arab countries from continuing to use “Arabian Gulf” or “The Gulf,” especially those who have had no prior attachments to Iranian archaeology (cf. Crawford 1998; Littleton 1998; Edens 1999; Orchard and Stanger 1999; Matthews 2000, 2003; Phillips 2001; Carter 2002; several papers in Potts et al. 2003; Beech 2004). Among the latter group, however, one can also see a gradual change from “Arabian Gulf” (cf. Magee 1999) to “The Gulf” (cf. Magee 2004; Weeks 2003), and finally to “Persian Gulf” (Carter, 2006; Weeks n.d.) as they come into closer contact with Iranian archaeology.

Why “Arabian Gulf”?

One can obviously appreciate the attempts by Western archaeologists to be polite toward their Arab hosts by using “Arabian Gulf,” but a closer inspection of the Arab attitude toward the Persian Gulf may suggest a larger design in which Western archaeologists have willingly or unwillingly become important players.

An account by a European who made the journey to Arab lands on the Persian Gulf in the mid-1950s is helpful in understanding the Arab perspective on the Persian Gulf and its name and how an outsider might react to this attitude:

No English map shows the Arabian Gulf; a matter of some concern for those who live there. A traveler has to proceed as though bound for the Persian Gulf—will probably think that that’s where he is when he reaches Kuwait or Bahrain, only to be told that that’s where he isn’t. Persian Gulf? The dry expanses of brown sand, those blue expanses of shallow water—and everything above and especially below—are, have been, will be, integral parts of the Arabian Gulf. This was one of the many things I did not know before going there. It was the first Arab statement of opinion I heard and it was repeated at intervals over a year of wandering until now it is an effort to think of such a place as a Persian Gulf. Since this is an account of a journey where after the initial effort I regularly took the line of least resistance, where I purposely deprived myself of purpose, willed myself to have no will and heaped the result on to the lap

of Allah, I shall refer to this burning, humid gulf of the world as "Persian" before my arrival and as "Arabian" after; for this is only polite. (Owen 1957: 13)

A courteous traveler, especially one who has chosen "the line of least resistance," can certainly use politeness as an excuse to call the Persian Gulf the Arabian Gulf so as not to offend his Arab hosts, but what about scholars who are bound by academic ethics? In order to answer this question, we need to explore the context within which archaeology operates in Arab lands, especially the Arab states on the Persian Gulf. The same traveler made the following observation about the local population of these lands: "Here were some poor people who are suddenly rich beyond their wildest dreams; and they've done nothing to deserve it, It's just chance. These undeserved riches are greater than anyone in history has amassed by hard work, merit, or even dishonesty" (14). On why westerners are eager to work in Arab lands, he adds: "Why go there? For nearly every foreigner in the Gulf there is the obvious answer: 'to earn money.' English and American companies are extracting oil. Oil royalties mean that the Arabs can buy goods and skill from the rest of the world, the Arab world, the Persian, the Indian as well as the European and American" (13). This seems to be the pattern in the recent history of Arab states on the Persian Gulf. Devoid of skills to build and maintain a country with modern amenities, but with grand ambitions and ample disposable wealth, Arabs could easily secure the best the West had to offer. Once the basics of a modern nation-state were in place by the 1950s, it was time to look into more ambitious aspirations, creating history being an important item on the agenda; and who was better qualified to do this than Western archaeologists?

A recent paper by the dean of Arabian archaeology reveals two interesting points about archaeology in Arab states on the Persian Gulf pertaining to funding and personnel. Potts's observation regarding the Arab attitude toward skilled laborers, including archaeologists, is of particular interest (Potts 1998: 193–194). He draws an analogy between the practice of slavery in Arab lands on the Persian Gulf, which continued well into the 1940s, and the skilled labor drawn to the region since the discovery of oil. In countries accustomed to slavery, cheap and disposable labor can come in many forms and colors. Once it was blacks from Africa; now it is browns from South Asia and whites from the West. Arabian archaeology functions within this system. With lavish support Arabs could easily lure Western archaeologists to carry out archaeological research in Arab countries. As for support extended to foreign archaeological expeditions, Potts points out: "In the recent past, expeditions to

Bahrain and teams in the United Arab Emirates . . . have been provided variously with accommodation, food, vehicles and workmen (some, or all, depending on the local authority) by the governments of their host countries. Air fares and other expenses . . . often come out of grants from national funding agencies as well as from local sponsors. While oil companies continue to be supportive, a wide range of other concerns such as car companies (e.g., General Motors), service companies (e.g., Dubai Duty Free), and tobacco companies (e.g., Rothmans) have given generously" (Potts 1998: 192–193). This kind of generous support would probably raise an eyebrow among archaeologists working in other parts of the world, who have to go through grilling application processes to various national or international funding agencies and scrape up whatever bits and pieces of money they can lay their hands on to carry out their fieldwork. But this also raises the question of why the Arabs are eager to support archaeological research on such a lavish scale. In other words, what do Arabs get in return for their support of archaeology? Potts believes that in return for their support of archaeology, companies earn prestige, rulers gain a reputation for being enlightened and progressive (1998: 193), and states demonstrate that they have arrived at a civilized stage by having museums and international conferences on archaeology and history. But would it be unfair to suppose that beyond these enlightened reasons to support archaeology, Arabs get much more in return? Publications by famous Western archaeologists in international journals using the name Arabian Gulf might be an example. A case in point was the comprehensive survey commissioned from 1976 onward by the Saudi Arabian Department of Antiquities, which employed, with salary, archaeologists from Britain and the United States (Potts 1998: 194) who produced literature abundantly using "Arabian Gulf" (Adams et al. 1977; Potts et al. 1978; Zarins et al. 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982).

The question remains, however: why are Arabs trying so hard to change the name of the Persian Gulf? Renaming a place is a common practice in many cultures. It is a sign of taking possession or signals the ascendancy of a new regime. Well-known examples of this practice include Constantinople being renamed Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest in 1452, or St. Petersburg being renamed Leningrad in 1924 following the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime. Arabs are no exception to this practice. Yathrib was renamed Medinat al-Nabi (the city of the prophet) after the Prophet Mohammad and his followers migrated from Mecca and settled there in 622 CE, and the Pillars of Hercules was renamed Jabal al-Tariq (Gibraltar) after Tariq ibn Ziyad, the Muslim commander who crossed the pass and marched into Spain in 711 CE (Amin 1981: 32).

It seems that the renaming of the Persian Gulf by Arabs is an attempt in the same vein. By calling this body of water Arabian Gulf, Arabs seem to be trying to signal the end of Iran's regional supremacy and to emphasize their own rising star. But we see that Arab attempts to change the name of the Persian Gulf did not reach an international level until the 1970s, when westerners—including archaeologists—began calling it the Arabian Gulf. In other words, what Arabs failed to do on their own, westerners, including Western archaeologists, managed to do for them.

Going back to the question of academic integrity among archaeologists, one may ask whether using "Arabian Gulf" is a precondition for working in Arab lands. Not necessarily; Arabs may try to influence Western archaeologists to use "Arabian Gulf" by promises of financial support, or Arabs may try to intimidate archaeologists by rejecting their work permits, but Arabs have no legal leverage to enforce use of the name Arabian Gulf, at least no international leverage. To establish this point, we see that many archaeologists still use the name Persian Gulf despite having to shift their research from Iran after the 1979 Revolution to Iraq (cf. Carter 1990) or other Arab countries (cf. Wenke 1999). There are also those who have worked in Arab lands for years but still use the name Persian Gulf (cf. Nissen 1988; Vita-Finzi 1998). In this group one can also include scholars whose research is primarily concerned with ancient Mesopotamia but who do not allow current politics to cloud their judgment (cf. Bottéro 1992, 2001; von Soden 1994; Snell 1997; Van De Mieroop 2004). Arabs may explicitly or implicitly push archaeologists to use the name Arabian Gulf, but ultimately it is up to individual archaeologists to implement the change.

Conclusion

Despite signing two UN documents (UNAD 311/Gen on March 5, 1971 and UNLA 45.8.2 (C) on August 10, 1984) endorsing the name Persian Gulf, Arab states continue to use and promote the name Arabian Gulf in various forms. For example, a recent study (Atrissi 1998) shows that despite different perspectives on Iranians (past and present) in textbooks across the Arab world, ranging from indifference (e.g., in Morocco) to a mild courteousness (e.g., in Syria) to deep resentment (in Iraq), they are unanimous in using "Arabian Gulf" to refer to this body of water. In fact, statements such as the following suggest that the Arabs are enjoying this name game: "There is a big Gulf, but the biggest gulf that separates us from the Iranians is that they insist and will remain calling it Persian,

and that it is our victory that the seven Arab Gulf states and the other fourteen Arab states call it Arab" (commentary in *al-Watan*, Dec. 24, 1994, quoted in Marschall 2003: 4). Whether or not this disregard of UN documents is a violation of international laws is up to political bodies to determine, but, depending on their disposition, Iranians find it either amusing or disconcerting. The former president of Iran expressed this view: "It is not at all wise for a group of countries to . . . decide on their own to change the name of what has been historically known as the Persian Gulf to 'Arabian Gulf.' What purpose does it serve, when your honorable neighbor is offended or a sense of insecurity is created in the region?" (Hashemi-Rafsanjani 1990: 465). On the international level, it is up to the Iranian government to apply direct and sustained pressure on Arab states to drop the name Arabian Gulf; but that is an undertaking that it is unwilling to enforce, fearing undesirable consequences for Iran's improving but fragile economic and commercial ties with Arab states. Incidents like that arising from the latest edition of the NGS atlas will continue until Iranians and Arabs reach an understanding regarding their proper place vis-à-vis the Persian Gulf.

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